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RUZEFAA/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000864

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/E AND ACTING A/S CARTER  
USAID/DCHA FOR EKVITASHVILI  
DCHA/OFDA FOR ACONVERY, KCHANNELL  
DCHA/FFP FOR JBORNS, PMOHAN  
USAID/AFR/EA FOR CTHOMPSON, JCICCARONE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Meeting with the TFG Minister of Humanitarian Affairs

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Summary  
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11. (U) On April 23, we met for the first time Mohamoud Abdi Ibrahim, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Resettlement for Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Ibrahim was appointed in February and was an active member of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia and participated in the Djibouti Process. The Minister initiated the meeting to establish a positive working relationship with the U.S. as Somalia's largest humanitarian donor. After multiple requests to former President Yusuf's government for a humanitarian liaison, with Minister Ibrahim's appointment, President Sharif made a break from the past. Ibrahim's priorities are to improve security and access for humanitarian agencies, coordinate humanitarian activities for the TFG, and build the institutional capacity of his ministry. We should consider funding an advisor to the ministry to improve his ministry's functioning and cooperation with the donor community.

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Introductory Meeting  
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12. (U) On April 23, PolOff and USAID Regional Food for Peace Officer met with Dr. Mohamoud Abdi Ibrahim, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Resettlement for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia. The Minister requested a meeting with U.S. government officials to discuss his ministry's priorities and to initiate coordination on humanitarian issues. While in Nairobi, he also met with UN and other donor representatives.

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Outlining Ministry Priorities  
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13. (U) The Minister announced his three priorities: 1) improve security and access for humanitarian agencies; 2) coordinate humanitarian activities for the TFG; and 3) build the institutional capacity of his ministry. Ibrahim indicated that at present, like in most of the TFG's ministries, there is limited staff and even more limited expertise on humanitarian issues. The Minister mentioned he was preparing a capacity-building plan for his ministry.

¶4. (U) We responded that improved security would allow the expansion of humanitarian aid into areas currently considered too dangerous for our partners to operate. He agreed that by simply improving security, the TFG could expand operating areas for agencies on the ground. We noted that this would help increase the absorptive capacity of our partners which is currently a serious impediment to a more robust humanitarian response. The minister also stressed that security must go hand in hand with peace-building initiatives.

¶5. (U) The Minister emphasized that he views his coordination function not as controlling humanitarian assistance but "ensuring support to vulnerable people." We discussed the importance of ensuring aid is not seen as favoring any one group over another but is disbursed impartially based on need. Minister Ibrahim assured us that he intended to maintain a positive working relationship with humanitarian agencies.

¶6. (U) As Minister Ibrahim was not familiar with the ways in which the U.S. typically delivers humanitarian and development assistance, we explained our practice of working through NGOs and UN agencies to advance shared TFG and donor priorities. Ibrahim said that his government does not see itself in competition with aid agencies, but rather as a partner who can help ensure more effective humanitarian assistance.

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Biographical Details  
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¶7. (SBU) The Minister is an ARS official who left Asmara with Sharif during the Djibouti Process. Ibrahim's appointment as Minister represents his first political position. He is an educational administrator by training and holds a PhD in Education. He previously served as a lecturer and served at the Ministry of Education in Siad Barre's government. Ibrahim founded the Educated Somalis Forum. He told us he was from Mogadishu and, other than his stint with Sheikh Sharif and the ARS in Asmara, has always been based in Somalia. With his limited command of English and exposure to Western nations, Ibrahim is a surprise appointment as a liaison with the international donor community but he appeared frank and did use the empty rhetoric of many of the self-appointed liaisons we have seen in the past. Ibrahim's family lives in Burao, Somaliland.

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Comment  
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¶8. (SBU) The minister conveyed asincere desire for a positive working relationship with the United States and other donors and humanitarian agencies. For the international community, frustrated after multiple requests to former President Yusuf's government for a humanitarian liaison and several failed attempts to establish one, Minister Ibrahim's appointment is a refreshing break from the past. We are heartened to see a minister - who at least in words - is expressing the same sentiments as the larger humanitarian community. While it is too early to tell how effective this ministry will be, his tone suggests a willingness to play a constructive role on humanitarian issues. It is an ideal opportunity for the United States to support (and fund) an advisor for the Minister to enhance communication and collaboration to more effectively deliver humanitarian assistance.

RANNEBERGER